

Paschal Epistle of Saint John Maximovitch

To the Western European And East Asian Flock And To All His Spiritual Children

1956

Let us cleanse our senses and see through the gleaming, unapproachable light of Christ's Resurrection.

Now is everything filled-full with light -- the heavens, the earth, and the underworld. All is presently bathed in light: Christ is risen from the dead. The heavens make merry, the earth rejoiceth, the underworld exulteth.

The Angels in Heaven hymn Thy Resurrection, O Christ-Saviour. Do Thou make us, on earth, also worthy to glorify Thee with a pure heart.

The Angelic Choir, horrified at seeing Its Creator and Master dead, doth now, in joyous song, glorify Him resurrected. Today doth Adam exult, and Eve rejoiceth; and with them do the Prophets and Patriarchs sing worthy songs to the Creator of all and to our Deliverer, Who did

descend into the underworld for our sake.

The Giver of Life doth lead men out of hell this day, and up-lifteth them to Heaven; He layeth low the powers of the enemy and breaketh down the gates of hell by the Divine power of His authority.

On earth, the Angels announce the gladsome tidings to men and declare Christ's Resurrection. Attired in gleaming white robes, the Angels ask the Myrrh-bearing Women: "Why seek ye the Living One amongst the dead? He is risen; He is not here! Come, see the place where the Lord did lie."

The Myrrh-bearing Women rush to the Apostles, bearing to them the joyous news. And through the Apostles and the Gospel is Christ's Resurrection preached unto all the world today.

Not all the Apostles immediately saw the risen Christ through spiritual eyes. Two disciples travelling to Emmaus did see Jesus walking with them, but did not recognize Him till such time as He had warmed their saddened hearts; and then were their spiritual eyes opened. Mary Magdalene conversed with Christ in the garden, but neither recognized Him nor was cognizant of

the mystery of the Resurrection, until the voice of her beloved Teacher touched her heart and illumined her soul, which had been given to thinking in worldly fashion.

'Twas the Belovèd Disciple John, whose heart was pure and undimmed by timidity, who before all others descried the light of the risen Christ through spiritual eyes; and with his bodily eyes did he behold the manifested Lord.

Scattering and dispersing the dark and gloomy tempest of sin, Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shone forth, gleaming not in the hearts and souls of the Apostles only, but in those of all who draw near to Him with faith, salvation seeking.

"Blessèd are those who have not seen and have believed," Christ quoth; "blessèd are those who have perceived Me not with bodily eyes, but with the eyes of the heart."

It was with his spiritual eyes that Archdeacon Stephan, the Proto-martyr, saw the heavens opened and the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God the Father. It was with eyes of faith that the risen Lord was beheld by Great-martyr George the Trophy-bearer and by all the other martyrs who laid down their earthly lives for Christ, in order that they might receive from Him life eternal. It was upon Him

that podvizhniki ["athletes"-of-the-spirit] did fix their spiritual gaze; despising earthly pleasures, they were crowned in the heavens with glory unfading.

But neither the scribes nor the pharisees, His enemies, saw the resurrected Christ. Nor did the tormentors of the martyrs see Him, strengthening the martyrs. Neither did, nor do, all those whose spiritual gaze is dimmed by unbelief, whose heart is befouled with sins and vices, whose will is directed only toward the earthly, ever see the light of the glory of the risen Christ.

Let us cleanse our hearts from all filth and foulness, and our spiritual eyes will be enlightened.

The light of Christ's Resurrection will flood and fill our souls, in like manner as the Church of the Resurrection, yearly, throughout the centuries, on Great Saturday, is illumined with light when the Orthodox -- and only the Orthodoxy -- Patriarch receives the Heavenly Fire.

Let us lift up our hearts! Let us forsake everything worldly; let us rejoice in this day and be exceeding glad! Christ is risen from the dead, having trampled death by death.

Christ is risen!

Archbishop John, the Pascha of Christ, 1956, Paris.

Source: <http://www.orthodox.net/pascha/pascha-ab-john-1956.html>